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# Erma Bombeck Virtual Museum Celebrates Writer's Birthday with Lost Sitcom Episodes

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Feb. 12, 2003  
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## NEWS RELEASE

*(Editor's Note: Please embargo this news until Friday, Feb. 21, which would have been Erma Bombeck's 76th birthday. To preview one of the "Maggie" programs, go to [www.ErmaMuseum.org/birthday.htm](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org/birthday.htm) All seven episodes will be available on Feb. 21. For interviews or questions about the site, contact Tim Bete at (937) 229-4960.)*

### ERMA BOMBECK VIRTUAL MUSEUM CELEBRATES WRITER'S BIRTHDAY WITH LOST SITCOM EPISODES

DAYTON, Ohio — Erma Bombeck would have celebrated her 76th birthday on Feb. 21, but the gift of her humor lives on because of an online museum created by the University of Dayton with the Bombeck family. Erma graduated from UD in 1949.

"Each year on Erma's birthday we like to add items to the Erma Bombeck Online Museum," said Tim Bete, humor columnist and curator of the museum ([www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org)). "It's our way of honoring Erma and giving her millions of fans something to help remember her. This year we've added seven complete episodes of the 'Maggie' sitcom Erma wrote and executive produced. The programs can be viewed on the Web."

While Erma Bombeck is best known for her newspaper column that celebrated the extraordinary in the ordinary and chronicled life's absurdities, the "Maggie" sitcom showed her versatility as a writer. Erma's syndicated column was carried by 700 newspapers prior to her death of kidney disease in 1996.

"Maggie," was about an ordinary family from Dayton, Ohio (where Erma grew up), and included a son who hadn't been seen since he'd entered the bathroom when he hit puberty. The show starred Doris Roberts, who later won an Emmy for her role in "Everybody Loves Raymond."

"I was a housewife and mother, too, so it was easy for me to come up with story ideas," said Karyl Miller, Emmy award-winning writer-producer who was the executive story

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consultant for the "Maggie" sitcom. "Working with Erma was wonderful. It was like having a girlfriend at work. Erma wasn't Hollywood, she was a housewife."

ABC ordered 13 episodes of "Maggie," which aired in late 1981 and early 1982. The show ran for eight weeks before it was canceled.

"Erma was so disappointed," said Miller. "She said, 'Maggie' was her one and only sitcom, whereas the other 'Maggie' writers would just go on to work on some other series — which was true. The show's timeslot was moved around a lot, so no viewers could find us. That's death to a new show."

The Erma Bombeck online museum was launched in February 2002 and contains more than 100 items including audio and video clips of Erma's family and friends, such as Phil Donahue, Bil Keane, Mike Peters and Liz Carpenter, among others. The museum also contains rare columns and photos and Erma's biography.

Erma Bombeck graduated from the University of Dayton in 1949 with a degree in English and never forgot that she got her start as a writer at UD. She credited the University of Dayton with preparing her for life and work, for making her believe she could write. The University of Dayton holds the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop ([www.HumorWriters.org](http://www.HumorWriters.org)) every other year to teach and encourage humor and human interest writers. The next workshop will be spring 2004. Other notable UD graduates in the media include Don Novello '64 (comedy writer, author and actor best known for the role Father Guido Sarducci on "Saturday Night Live"), Denise Palmer '77 (publisher and CEO, *Baltimore Sun*), Thomas Mazza '81 (independent producer, formerly president of Columbia Tri-Star Television and executive vice president of Paramount Network Television), Jay Smith (president, Cox Newspapers) and Chip Bok '74 (nationally syndicated editorial cartoonist, *Beacon Journal*).

"You don't have to check your local TV listings to see when 'Maggie' will be on," says Bete. "You can tune in and laugh 24/7. That's a pretty good time slot for a show that was canceled."

You can visit the museum at [www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org).

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For media interviews, contact **Karyl Miller** at (858) 273-4999 PST, [Karyl@MillerReport.com](mailto:Karyl@MillerReport.com) or **Tim Bete** at (937) 229-4960 EST, [bete@udayton.edu](mailto:bete@udayton.edu). To preview one of the "Maggie" programs, go to [www.ErmaMuseum.org/birthday.htm](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org/birthday.htm). All seven episodes will be available on Feb. 21.